

Renee, Book #1 (Part 2

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Category: Animorphs
Language: English
Status: In-Progress
Published: 1999-11-14 09:00:00
Updated: 1999-11-14 09:00:00
Packaged: 2016-04-27 10:36:21
Rating: K
Chapters: 1
Words: 1,409
Publisher: www.fanfiction.net
Summary: The second part of the story (by no means finished....sigh)

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~*~ Chapter Eight ~*~

I arrived at Rachel's house soon. It wasn't that far away, and the cat was fast. I leaped inside through an open window.

Rachel wasn't there yet. My kitty heart beat faster. What if David had caught her somehow?

"I'm home, Mom!"

I sighed in relief. Rachel ran up the stairs and I prepared to demorph, letting her know that David had left the mall.

Suddenly, on an impulse, I darted under the bed.

Rachel laughed wickedly. "Now to call that foolish leader," she muttered. "I didn't get you last time, Jake, but I will. A meeting! Yes, I'll schedule a meeting. And then I'll destroy them all."

David. In morph.

Where was Rachel?!

I began to demorph. I was under the bed, so he/she'd have trouble seeing me. I was too disconcerted to think about how my first-ever demorph was proceeding -- I wasn't aware of any details.

BEEP, BEEP, BOOP, BOOP, BEEP, BEEP, BOOP.

Brrriiiiing. Brrriiiiing.

"Hello, is Jake there?"

"No, Rachel. He left a little while ago. I think he went over to Cassie's or something."

"Oh. Thanks."

"Bye, Rach."

"Bye."

Click.

"Already in a meeting!" David exulted.

I paused for breath and then began to remorph. Northern harrier! I had to fly, and fly fast. I had to beat David there. Fortunately, he had to demorph and then remorph. I took to the air.

~What the!~ he raged as he began to morph. ~WHO IS THAT?!~ ~My name's Renee, David,~ I called down to him. ~Remember it. And you'd better run, because I know the Animorphs will come after you if I beat you there.~

I flew in silence, as fast as I could. My wings strained with the effort. I gained altitude, then dived. Finally I arrived at the barn.

"Renee, you're late," Jake informed me. "And Rachel still isn't here. Neither is Cassie."

~What?~ I said, chilled my hollow bird bones.

"I thought you were at the mall with Rachel," Marco said.

"I was," I said, demorphing. "But we saw David. I tried to stall him while they left, but --"

"DAVID?!" Marco shrieked.

"Yes, David, Marco," I said. "I tried to stall him, then morphed and got to Rachel's. David showed up -- in a morph of Rachel. Yes, you heard me right. He called Jake's house, found out that Jake was at Cassie's, and left."

"How did he get out of rat morph?!" Marco ranted.

"I don't know," I said. "But I do --"

"Hi, everyone!" Rachel said, walking in. "Sorry I'm late."

"Did you see anything weird at the mall today, Rachel?" Jake asked.

"David's back," she said in a cold tone. "He's back. I looked everywhere for Cassie but I can't find her!"

It sounded like Rachel. Was it?

I sent Jake a look that said, "I'll take care of it," and turned to

Rachel. "Hey, Rachel. Did you have fun shopping with me today?"

"Oh, yes. It was so cool!"

"A lot like when you and Cassie go shopping, right? When you shop for hours?"

"Yeah, a lot like that. I mean, Cassie can shop forever!"

"Ax!" Jake blurted.

Aximili whipped his scorpion tail to David's -- yes, DAVID's -- throat.

"Cassie hates shopping," Jake said flatly. "Nice try, rat-boy."

~*~ Chapter Nine ~*~

David shrieked in rage at being found out so quickly. He turned to run, but the tail blade at his throat stopped him.

~What have you done with Cassie and Rachel?~ Tobias demanded.

"Like I'd tell you?!"

"You will tell us, David," I said softly. "You know whether or not that tail blade at your throat could end your life. And so, you'll tell us."

He glared at me with hatred in his face. I shook my head. Seeing that much hatred always affects me -- it's a sick emotion. People who are filled with hatred have no control over themselves or their actions.

My bracelet jingled. Suddenly it hit me that I had morphed, and was still wearing my necklace and bracelet. I shivered. That was very, very unnatural, according to the Animorphs.

"Okay, fine," David spat. "I killed them! Do you have a problem with that, Animorphs?! You, who would have left me as a rat?! You, who would have left my parents as slaves?! Do you have a problem with that?!"

I gasped in horror. But I was reading David's countenance. It couldn't be true. It wasn't true. I shook my head.

"David, you know that's not true," I said quietly. "They are alive. Where are they?"

"They're not alive!"

"David, you know that's not true," I repeated. "They are alive. Where are they?"

He looked surprised at my word-for-word repetition. I raised my bracelet and glanced in the locket. The meaning was clear. I would help him find his parents...if he would give me back my friends.

He nodded. "Okay. Fine. They're both still trying to find me. I

tricked them into thinking that I had flown into the woods, and there is a golden eagle that lives there. They'll keep trying to find me all night, and even if they do catch him, I will have suffered no loss."

"Thanks, David," I said, cutting off the words that seemed about to explode from Marco and Jake by a raised hand. Judging by the looks on their faces, they wouldn't have been very polite. "Now. Answer another question, please: Why are you after the Animorphs, if your only goal is to free your parents?"

"I need that blue box to ransom them with. I need something that Visser Three wants."

I shook my head. "No, David. If he gets the blue box, he'll conquer Earth."

"I don't care!" he screamed in sudden fury. "You never even knew your parents, Renee! You don't know what it's like for me!"

His words brought a fresh pang to my heart. I felt the tears struggling to well up, but with practiced ease I shut them away. I'd never cried; I wouldn't cry now.

"That's not fair, David," I said. "I never knew my parents. I've missed them all my life. You knew them and lost them and now you have a chance to get them back. But you must know you can't do it alone."

He met my gaze, the hatred significantly diminished.

"Renee, what are you thinking?!" Jake roared finally. "You can't help him! He'll kill us!"

"Jake, you don't know what I've gone through missing my family," I said sadly. "You can't begin to grasp what it's like for him. Or maybe you can. Tom is a Controller, after all."

His eyes widened. "You can't compare them!"

"No matter what he did to the group -- no matter what he tried to do -- his parents are not to blame," I replied. "Just like Tom isn't to blame for the Hork-Bajir and Controllers that you killed."

He froze. I didn't know why I'd said that -- it didn't make sense to me, since David had tried to kill the resistance and Jake had tried to kill the evil -- but it made Jake stop complaining.

"And what happens afterward?" Marco spat. "What happens after his parents are free? What happens when he decides to turn on us? What happens if the Yeerks find him and his parents and make them Controllers again -- with him knowing who we are? What happens then, Renee? What happens when the human race is doomed and it's your fault?"

I looked him in the eye. "Then I'll tell you that you were right, that your ideas were the right ones. Until then, I'll do what I think is best."

~You had just better know what you are doing,~ Tobias hissed.

Aximili had said absolutely nothing. I looked to him for support. He looked away.

I felt hurt. I hadn't known that he disagreed with me. But I wasn't going to back away from my views for anyone, the Andalite included.

"Well, do we have a deal?" I asked David. "I'll help you free your parents, and you stay away from the Animorphs and the blue box."

"Done."

End
file.